

ALAN MOORE'S



REVIEWS

NUMBER 73

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FORTEAN TIMES

THE JOURNAL OF STRANGE PHENOMENA

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**P
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THE RETURN OF THE PHANTOM JAYWALKER

- BRITISH BIG CATS • VIRGIN MARY SIGHTINGS
- WEIRD SEX • WILLIAM GIBSON INTERVIEW
- WHO'S DUMPING FOXES? • MARTIAN MISHAPS

Sex and Death

FAIR GAME

by Bernard DuClos.

Mondo, London, 1993, pb £4.99, pp284, photos.

SEXUAL HOMICIDE

Patterns and Motives

by Robert K. Ressler, Ann W. Burgess and John E. Douglas.

Simon & Schuster, London, 1993, pb £9.99, pp250, index, notes, illus, appendix.

● "Murder is very real." So states one of the 36 anonymous sexual murderers systematically analysed in Ressler, Burgess and Douglas's *Sexual Homicide*. We have no reason to doubt him. Homicide represents humanity in extremis; an event of the flesh, apocalyptic and utter, beyond which the human territory is unimaginable. The act, its very idea, cuts through the abstraction of our increasingly virtual lives, and reconnects us with our own remote mortality. Murder is very real and we, of course, are fascinated. Industries are born, a spreading pool of movies, magazines and trading cards coagulating round the were-wolf-totem of the serial murderer... and an endless channel library of books.

Of the two works considered here, *Fair Game* by Bernard DuClos elicits less interest as a book than as a symptom. A competently-written journalistic potboiler concerning Robert Hansen, an Alaskan serial rapist/murderer, the worst (and best) that can be said of *Fair Game*'s content is that it is unexceptional; it contributes nothing to our understanding of such crimes. Its packaging, however, is deserving of more thorough commentary.

Against funereal black the title lettering is cut away to show Alaskan icefields, filtered pink, become a vast blood sorbet. A helpful blurb reads: "In the snows of Alaska, no-one could hear their screams", reducing 18 raped and murdered women to the level of the latest *Aliens* novelisation. On the back cover, copywriters lavish a description of the crime – "After giving them a few minutes head start, he would stalk his human prey, hunting them down like helpless animals" – that is nowhere substantiated in the book itself. This body-bag pornography is rounded out by

an obligatory evocation of the Federal VICAP program "made famous by *The Silence of the Lambs*".

Substituting insight and analysis for sloppy sensationalism, *Sexual Homicide* rises above the spattered alleyways of the True Crime ghetto and presents with icy lucidity the most useful and comprehensive appraisal of its subject to date. The killers' mythology is stripped away. Even their charged, talismanic names have been excised in the mass anonymity of their statistical group, although aficionados will recognize some from their case histories: Berkowitz, Kemper, and others. Their backgrounds, their childhood obsessions, their pre-crime and post-crime behaviour patterns and more, tabulated and charted, comparisons made and connecting lines drawn in a tentative map of the bleak, unknown countries of murder.

Fascinating and yet never prurient, *Sexual Homicide* represents state-of-the-art criminology, covering everything from advice on victim response to the increasing role of artificial intelligence in profiling and locating murderers. The only criticism that can be made is of occasional blind-spots, born perhaps of an authoritarian bias in the VICAP program itself: although aberrant sexual behaviour and substance abuse during early life are rightly considered, the fact that 14 of the 36 men polled had served in the military is ignored. Religious background similarly goes unquestioned.

That said, there is still no doubt concerning the relative worth of the two books presented here. *Sexual Homicide* is an invaluable milestone for both the traditional and the armchair detective. *Fair Game* is another piece of meat for the armchair murderer.

Alan Moore

COSMOS, CHAOS AND THE WORLD TO COME

The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith

by Norman Cohn

● In a world where Waco, the White Brotherhood and the Fundamentalist "Rapture" hit the headlines with monotonous regularity, it's perhaps timely that we should be reminded just how prone we are to invent world-views and believe in them, forgetting where the ideas originate, or even that they've been invented in the first place. In this excellent prequel to his classic *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, Norman Cohn investigates a major change in human consciousness and demonstrates that some of our current concerns have their roots more than 3,000 years ago.

The area under investigation is centred on the Near East, and Cohn begins by describing the ancient world-conceptions of the Egyptians, Mesopotamians, etc.: an immutable world where the gods created order from chaos, yet chaos always threatened and was only to be kept at bay by a divine warrior. Death was followed by an equally immutable after-life in the world of the dead, with no future paradise or redemption. Toward the end of the 2nd millennium BC, Zoroaster changed all that by introducing the idea of a changing world, moving eventually to a state where chaos was ultimately defeated and a god-given world of absolute good was established in its stead.

Cohn then traces the development of the idea, with great skill and learning, from its adoption by the Jewish religion through the development of the Jewish apocalyptic literature to the Jesus sect, the Book of Revelation and the beginning of the Christian church. Each step of the way is carefully traced and heavily referenced: the replacement of Jewish polytheism by monotheism, Iranian influence during the Jewish exile, the representation of the forces of chaos as the imperialist Greek or Roman rulers of Palestine, the transformation of the concept of the 'good world' from a mundane to heavenly kingdom, and much else besides.

Although Cohn hardly belabours the point, the desperate absurdities of the conception, originating in specific historical

circumstances but persisting long after those circumstances have become obsolescent, are there for all to see. The Apocalypse is immediately imminent (and has been for 3,000 years) and only the elite will be saved, while the true believer can indulge in fantasies of vengeance on his oppressors with the simple faith that he will be redeemed in the world to come. It's a lamentable notion, probably responsible for more schisms, religious wars, mass suicides and plain stupidity than anything else I can think of. Worse, its adherents obviously have no idea that they're repeating ideas originating far outside their own traditions. With our own calendrical millennium fast approaching, this is a much-needed injection of sense and scholarship. Highly recommended.

Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1993, hb £20.00 (\$30.00), pp281, index, refs.

Steve Moore

GRIND SHOW

Weirdness as Entertainment
by Fred Olen Ray

● Apart from the occasional honourable survivor like Professor Stromboli's "Strangest Show on Earth" or visitors like the Jim Rose Circus Sideshow, the art of the Grind Show has long since been snuffed out in Britain, but in the States it lives still. The carnival routes of America are still followed by these purveyors of weird entertainment and dubious taste, be they illusion shows like the Living Headless Woman or Gorilla Girl, exhibitions like "Freaks from the Farm", "Museum of the Unusual" and even the decidedly non-PC "Thalidomide Baby Show"; or Ten-in-ones, featuring a number of bizarre acts such as Rubber Girl, Alligator Man or Wild Jungle Girl (often Rubber Girl in a different costume).

Their numbers decrease by the year, as they are eased out by even tighter regulations and more profitable fairground rides. But in Fred Olen Ray they have the ideal person to capture them in their full seedy glory. Having cut his teeth as a film director-producer on such undying classics as "Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers" and "Teenage Exorcist", he now tours a "Terrors of the Amazon" Grind on the carnival circuit.

Short though it may be, this

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FORTEAN TIMES

THE JOURNAL OF STRANGE PHENOMENA



VISIONS OF A RED PLANET

MARTIAN MEDIUMS OF THE 1890'S

THYLACINES, YOWIES & BUNYIPS
ON THE TRAIL OF AUSTRALIA'S MYSTERY MONSTERS

PLUS: PANIC IN GUATEMALA, VIRTUAL EARTHQUAKE,
ALBINO FROG PLAGUES, NAZI SLASHER HOAX

ISSN 0308-5899



THE DIARY OF JACK THE RIPPER

by (allegedly, Ripper, Jack T.) – narrative by Shirley Harrison.

There are lies, damned lies, statistics and books about Jack the Ripper. Having escaped into mythology with his identity inviolate, the Whitechapel murderer is a blank screen onto which the enterprising may project whatever fantasies they wish. Over the last 20 years we have enjoyed a procession of suspects including Dr Barnardo, Lord Randolph Churchill and the Duke of Clarence. Aleister Crowley, ever original, identified the culprit as Madame Blavatsky.

The truth of the Whitechapel murders is at once more prosaic and more sublimely mysterious. Firstly, nobody knows whodunnit. Secondly, in all probability, nobody will ever know whodunnit. That's it. Everything else is fiction. Of course, this hasn't prevented a whole abattoir-full of authors declaring their particular book about Jack the Ripper to be the final solution, the killer unmasked, the truth revealed. In fairness, though, the book currently under review is not just another book about Jack the Ripper. This one is *by* him.

The front cover is our first indication that something is wrong. Between printing and publication, an adhesive sticker has been placed over the original cover blurb ("The Discovery. The Investigation. The Authentication."). The sticker asks, plaintively, "Is it genuine?" It then suggests: "Read the evidence, then judge for yourself." Well, I've read, I've judged, and the answer is a flat and unambiguous No.

The list of absurdities is overwhelming and begins with the identification of the culprit as James Maybrick, formerly known only as victim in another Victorian murder case. This is roughly analogous to revealing that the Boston Strangler was Sharon Tate. Elsewhere in the diaries the "killer" rants venomously about Inspector Abberline. Since research by Martin Fido and others has demonstrated that Abberline was neither the most senior nor the most prominent detective involved with the case, we must suppose that entries such as "I curse him so. Abberline, Abberline, Abberline, the devil take the bastard" were written in reference to Michael Caine's performance as the inspector in the late-Eighties TV mini-series.

It gets worse. We are allowed to share the killer's glee at coining the name "Jack the Ripper", despite the fact that the name on the Ripper letters was almost certainly coined by the



An original depiction from *Illustrated Police News*, 6 Oct 1888.

tabloid journalists who forged them. We are shown the same old photograph of poor, eviscerated Mary Kelly and asked to accept that the clearly random stain on the wall behind her is a letter "M" for Maybrick. We are shown a photograph of Mike Barrett, the journal's owner, and can only marvel at his unfortunate physical resemblance to the character played by Alexei Sayle in the dramatized *Hitler Diaries*. We are treated to passages that end in hand-written maniacal laughter, and expected to take this copper-plate hysteria seriously.

This book is mad rubbish, and I make no apology for its rough handling here. To paraphrase the man himself: "I am down on bad Whitechapel writings, and I shan't quit ripping them till I do get buckled".

Smith Gryphon, London 1993, hb £15.99, pp316, index, bib, plates.

Alan Moore

Postscript: Barrett has since confessed to the forgery – a report will appear in the next issue.

that, bizarre as claims about UFO experiences are, many facets of them are echoed in the Vedic epics. And in Part II, in one illuminating passage, he recounts an episode in the Mahabharata in which King Duryodhana is kidnapped by the gods, and draws its precise parallels with the standard UFO 'abduction scenario'.

What Dr Thompson does not make of this is both fascinating and frustrating. He regards the similarities as a kind of proof that the UFO abduction scenario is real and true because it is echoed in the ancient texts. He does not seem to have considered, ever, that both accounts are so alike structurally because the small drama they encompass answers a particular human need and expresses it metaphorically. This failure to step back a pace from his material eventually contaminates the whole book.

Even before this, frustration has set in for another reason. Dr Thompson doesn't give us any equipment with which to sense how the ancient sages and poets who created the Vedic hymns saw their own work, or their gods, or how their religious art was formed by and fitted into their own society and its beliefs. We are not even told that Hindu tradition holds that there are no less than 330 million gods, or that the Mahabharata is most likely an epic metaphorical description of a mundane but crucial civil war; which would have put some matters into perspective. It's not even that difficult, if you know your stuff: Prof. Ninian Smart manages it brilliantly in a few dozen pages of *The World's Religions* (Cambridge, 1989), which I commend to anyone who would like a quick immersion before plunging into *Alien Identities*.

It slowly dawns that Dr Thompson takes the Vedic texts absolutely "directly" and without question as evidence that, long

ago and perhaps even today, "higher-dimensional" beings are whizzing about the sky in vehicles that do all that UFOs are purported to do and sometimes more. This leads him to take such wild effusions as Subbaraya Sastry's channelled "lost epic" with undue seriousness (there are crueller ways of putting that), and to take some of the dodgier UFO claimants, notably the egregious Willy Meier and the inscrutable Travis Walton, at somewhat more than face value.

Occasional hilarities result. Noting how one of the gods was so entranced by the beauty of a mortal female that he fell out of his vimana in his infatuation, Dr Thompson, with no sign of having recognised a joke when he hears one, solemnly comments: "It would seem that [his] vimana was a small single-seater. Perhaps he didn't have adequate seatbelts, and he banked too steeply while trying to see [her]."

Dr Thompson has put enormous industry and erudition into his book, and yet it is ultimately empty. It could well – God forbid – revive the tiresome 'ancient astronauts' clique from their long sleep under the mountain. What I hope it will do is arouse a real scholar of the Vedic texts and of early and classical Indian civilization to a great ire. Then, we might have a genuine comparative study of one ancient and one modern myth, from two utterly different sources, that have many intriguing similarities. Then, we may be a little closer to recognising their common roots in the irrespressible creative play of the human mind.

Govardhan Hill Publishing, San Diego, 1993, pb \$19.95, pp492, index, bib, refs

Peter Brooksmith

NUMBER 80

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FORTEAN TIMES

THE JOURNAL OF STRANGE PHENOMENA

STALKING THE BEAST

BIG CAT SIGHTINGS
ACROSS THE UK

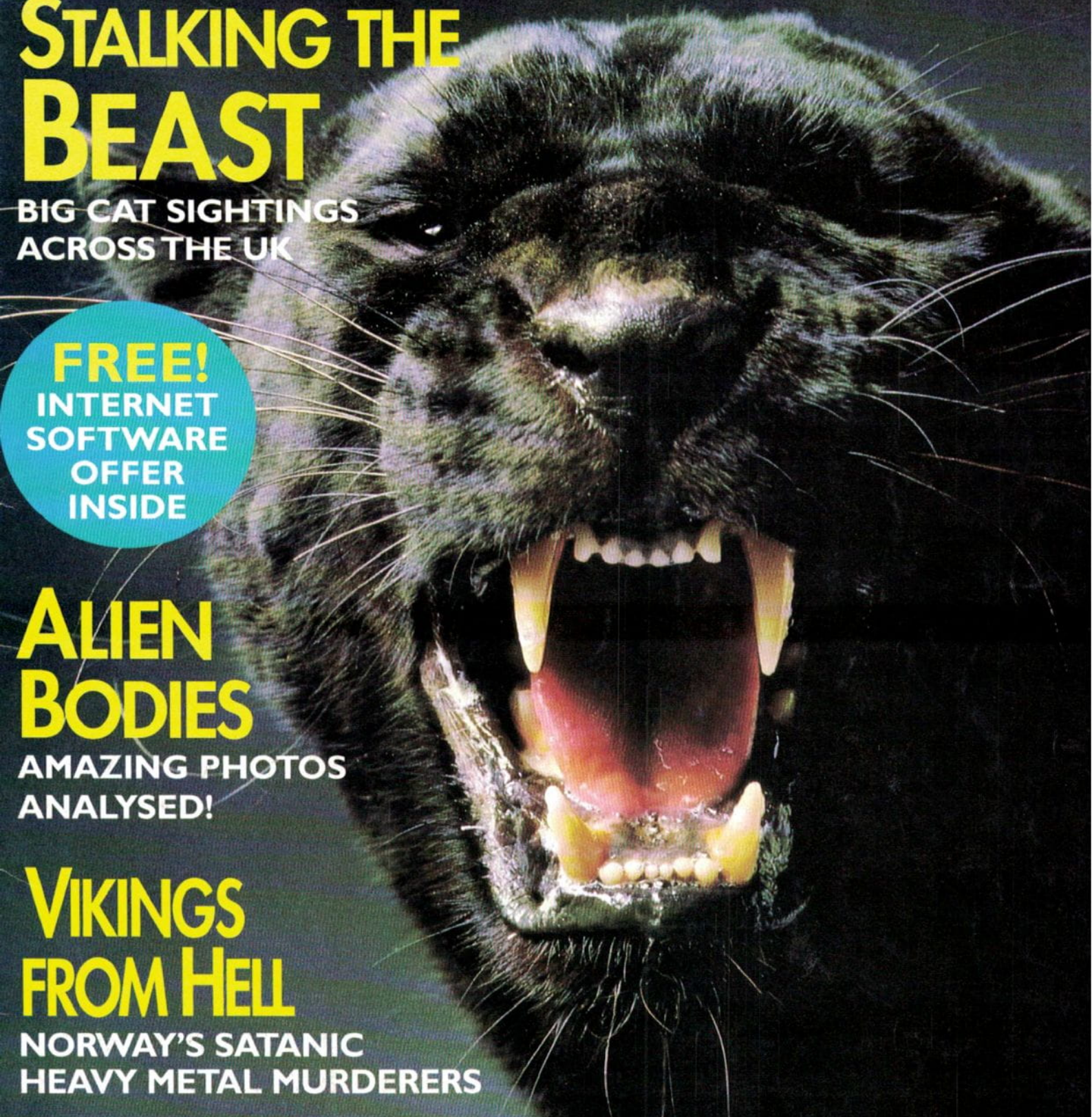
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VIKINGS FROM HELL

NORWAY'S SATANIC
HEAVY METAL MURDERERS



THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF JACK THE RIPPER

by Phillip Sugden

Phillip Sugden's book puts one in mind of the Koch Snowflake; this is a complex mathematical shape, formed by adorning each side of an equilateral triangle with another triangle of half the size, and then continuing this process iteratively until we arrive at something very like a snowflake with an infinitely "crinkly" fractal edge. Although the edge of the shape can thus become infinite, its area can never exceed that of a circle drawn around the original equilateral triangle.

Our examination of the Whitechapel murders has become a Koch Snowflake with unending new wrinkles at the edge but no possibility of ever exceeding the initial circle. *The Complete History of Jack the Ripper* is an admirably well-researched book that probably lives up to its claim of being "the definitive account" of the Whitechapel murders.

Simply put, Sugden's book contains every scrap of information that you're ever likely to need about the crimes, while sensibly avoiding the temptation to name a culprit (despite coming dangerously close in a last-chapter argument for poisoner George Chapman, a bewildering lapse in an otherwise very sensible work). His meticulous researches have unearthed snippets of information not to be found elsewhere, and for this alone the book is highly recommended.

However, it must be said that there are only snippets that remain to be unearthed after the thorough excavation of these crimes that the last century has seen. This is not to criticize Sugden's exemplary book so much as the field of "Ripperology" in general. Each new crop of Ripper books brings some new fragment to the crimes, as Sugden does with his fresh details of the possibly-related Martha Tabram murder, but the basic breadth of information pertinent to Jack the Ripper is the same now as it was in 1888.

Sugden's book is, of its kind, perhaps the very best, yet by its excellence it casts doubt upon the purpose of further enquiry. Praiseworthy, but ominous.

Robinson, London, 1994, hb £20.00, pp532, index, bib, photos.

Alan Moore

BIOLOGICAL ANOMALIES: Humans III

by William R. Corliss

Corliss' great 'Catalog of Anomalies' project marches inexorably forward, this being his fourteenth footstep towards the horizon - this time a most valuable collection of obscure, profound and puzzling data about humans. There are four sections: the first dealing with anomalistic human fossils (including both giant and miniature skeletons, and those in strata anachronistically); the second with human genetic anomalies; the third with 'unrecognised' species of hominids (including a variety of types, from Yeti and Sasquatch to odd pygmies from China, Africa, Australia, Siberia and the Arctic); and the last exploring man's interactions with other species, computers and the planet itself. As usual, there are full references, useful anomaly ratings and three indexes. No Fortean researcher should be without these volumes.

The Sourcebook Project, Box 107, Glen Arm, MD 21057, USA. 1994, hb \$19.95 or £14, pp212, illus, refs, indexes.

Bob Rickard

COMPETITION CORNER

Competition #9 Can you name the secret testing range for Nazi rockets? The first three entries pulled from the wreckage of a crashed flying disc each win a copy of *Man-made UFOs* by Vesco and Childress. Only one entry per person, please, to reach us by postcard, email or fax by 1 June 1995.

Congratulations to Kirk Hargrave-Parsons of Leicester; Martin Stubbs of London; and Max McLaughlin of Kitchener, Ontario - winners of Competition #7 - who correctly named Swansdown as the imaginary town destroyed by Cromwell's troops. They each win a copy of *Maypoles, Martyrs and Mayhem* courtesy of Bloomsbury Books. There were nearly 100 entrants - a sign that we should make the questions harder.

NIGHTS IN HAUNTED HOUSES

by Peter Underwood

The former President of the Ghost Club now offers a 'through-the-keyhole glance' at the activities of former associates when carrying out all-night vigils in some 30 buildings alleged to be haunted. But his claim that the Club "as depicted... no longer exists" is totally untrue, for it continues to be fully active.

His attitude to the scientific approach is also questionable, for he feels that the "highly sophisticated equipment that is available these days" is virtually useless in haunted houses because, being so efficient, it "records or registers the very slightest sound, movement or effect", something normal researchers would surely need in establishing "scientifically whatever may be happening."

There is, nevertheless, some useful background historical detail with interesting highlights, but the need to resort to seances rather negates the serious approach one would have hoped for. Similarly, the use of 'detective work' to learn details of the phenomena experienced by the owner of the site can precondition the mind, and the risk of colouring any event through imagination is likely to occur. Still, in this case "during the seances two entities seemed to be trying to get through." When asked their name the reply was "Why?"

This all seems an expensive way of finding out what a couple of dozen people do to 'establish' a haunting, thought it was nice to know, of course, that the then-President always ensured he had "a darn good time."

Headline, London, 1994, hb £16.99, pp245, index, bib, illus.

Andrew Green

MAGWATCH

A number of readers have requested additional information on prices of the magazines we review; from now on we will give any prices on sample issues or an annual sub. This time we'll run through a few periodicals that we find essential for keeping informed. UFO magazines, next issue

FATE General Fortean, founded in 1947 and still going strong every month. No sample; sub: \$21.50 (add \$8 for overseas). Fate Magazine (Dept FT), Box 1940, 170 Future Way, Marion, OH 43305-1940, USA. US toll-free call 1-800-6691002.

INFO JOURNAL, the oldest extant Fortean society journal, renewed, vigorous and full of interest. No sample; sub: \$12 (\$16 overseas). INFO (Dept FT), Box 367, Arlington, VA 22210-0367, USA.

THE SKEPTIC. Steve Donnelly and Toby Howard's bimonthly magazine for UK skeptics, but with articles of interest to Fortean any-where. No sample; Sub: £12 (add £3.50 overseas). Skeptic (Dept FT), Box 475, Manchester M60 2TH, UK.

SKEPTICAL INQUIRER, the bimonthly magazine published by CSICOP, edited by Kendrick Frazier, now in a larger format but still packed with cracking articles that you don't have to agree with

but would be foolish to ignore. No sample, but subs range from \$29.50. Skeptical Inquirer (Dept FT), Box 703, Amherst, NY 14226-0703. US toll-free call 1-800-634-1610.

SCIENCE FRONTIERS. William Corliss's bimonthly newsletter that rounds up scientific Fortean. Excellent value. No sample; \$7 (or free to customers of his book service). Sourcebook Project (Dept FT), Box 107, Glen Arm, MD 21057, USA.

STRANGE, Mark Chorvin-sky's biannual magazine, frequently with in-depth articles. Sample: \$5.95 (add \$1.50 overseas). Strange Magazine (Dept FT), Box 2246, Rockville, MD 20847, USA. US tel 301-460-4789.

THE ANOMALIST makes a solid contribution as a bi-annual forum for in-depth studies of American Fortean, edited by Dennis Stacy and Patrick Huyghe. Single issue: \$10 (+ \$2.50 p&p). Anomalist (Dept FT), Box 12434, San Antonio, TX 78212, USA.

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FORTEAN TIMES

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ALIEN SNUFF

Putting the knife into
the Roswell autopsy

PENIS PANIC

Shrinking assets
shock hits China

OUT THERE!

The Truth Behind the X-Files

PLUS: LAKE MONSTER FILMED, BRIAN LARA'S VODOO CURSE,
GHOST PLANES, BRISTOL'S VAMPIRE SECRETARY, HERMAPHRO-GOAT



THE R'LYEH TEXT

by Robert Turner

As part of Skoob's Esoterica series, Robert Turner has compiled a fascinating wander through the monstrous garden of occult ideas that has grown up around the work of the New England visionary H.P. Lovecraft. An addendum to Turner's earlier commentary upon Lovecraft's mythical Necronomicon, *The R'lyeh Text* abounds with speculation as to possible corroborations between Lovecraft's hideous Cthulu Mythos and conventional occult lore.

Colin Wilson's introduction is both long and yet surprisingly enjoyable, touching upon connections between Lovecraft's "Old Ones", Sirius mysteries and the destruction of Atlantis, while Patricia Shore's essay "Awake in the Witch-house" examines such diverse phenomena as 16th-century witch trials and the discerning Fortean's favourite talking mongoose, Gef, once famous on the Isle of Man.

An entertaining read for Lovecraft scholars or those interested in the twilight areas between the real and the fictitious. Recommended.

Skoob Books, London, 1995, pb £6.99, 175pp, bib, notes, illus. ISBN: 1-871438-90-X

Alan Moore

NANO!

Remaking the World Atom by Atom

by Ed Regis

No, this hasn't got anything to do with Mork and Mindy (that was "Nannu") but it does perhaps have a little to do with one of Robin Williams' more recent roles, the Genie in *Aladdin* ["PHENOMENAL COSMIC POWER - itty bitty living space"] for this is about engineering on the atomic level.

Nanotechnology involves machines made up of a handful of atoms capable of manipulating the very building blocks of the universe, potentially giving humanity complete control over its surroundings, cures for everything, free energy, immortality even, and all in a completely green way - or so its most fervent promoter K. Eric Drexler would have us believe.

Of course, we don't have anything approaching the level of miniature tech yet, but we are close enough to see it coming and in this book Ed Regis continues doing what he does best, looking at science by scrutinising those who do it. Regis follows the technology's rising curve from when Richard Feynman first sighted it in 1960 through to today where it teeters on the brink of world-shattering reality.

As well written as its predecessors, *Great Mambo Chicken and the Transhuman Condition*, and *Who Got Einstein's Office?* it perhaps suffers a little from having to concentrate so heavily on Drexler, lacking the diversity of strong characters in his previous books. It is, nonetheless, easily the most readable book yet published on this revolutionary research which has the potential to change almost every aspect of our lives, if and when it arrives.

Transworld, London, 1995, hb £16.99, pp306, figs, plates, bib. ISBN: 0593-027868

Ian Simmons

THE DEVIL

A Mask Without a Face

by Luther Link

A masterful analysis of the iconography of the Christian Devil, mainly covering the 6th to 16th centuries, but tracing back Old Nick's origins to the pagan world and its imagery, traduced by the early church for its own purposes.

Richly illustrated, in both colour and black-and-white, and enlivened by a dry wit, this traces the currents of thought in the early and mediaeval church and how they were reflected in the developing portrayals of the Devil; how such things as the Last Judgement relate to the burning of heretics, and other such matters that show just how much the Devil was integrated into Christianity, rather than remaining outside as its enemy. Much more than art history, this is full of fascinating insights; and anyone who classifies types of devils in terms of their resemblance to Godzilla or otherwise, can't be all bad!

Reaktion Books, London, 1995, hb £17.95, pp208, index, bib, refs, illus. ISBN 0-948462-67-1

Steve Moore



Just say no, kids: after spying on the children from bushes, Ceto the Gray asks Anne and Seth if they'd like to ride in his spaceship.

CETO'S NEW FRIENDS

by Leah A. Haley

Of all the spooky books in the field of ufology this must rank as one of the most dubious and irresponsible. It is a large format children's picture book that tells, in 28 full-page, full-colour pictures, of an encounter between Ceto, a grey alien, and two young Earthlings.

Leah Haley is a graduate of the Budd Hopkins/John Mack school of self-helped abductees - in fact, in the magic circle of abductee-believers, she is accepted as the only known abductee who was in a UFO when it was shot down by the US military. (Her own account of her lifetime of contactee experiences, *Lost was the Key*, has yet to be reviewed here.)

Haley's expressed motive is "to alleviate the fears that young abductees have about aliens". If the sheer volume of abductee narratives are to be believed, the great majority of abductees had their first experience during childhood - unless, of course, you count those who were spirited away from their mothers' wombs before their Earthbound childhood even began. And here is the problem: Haley is, in effect, saying that these deceitful and arrogant Grays, whom most of her troubled colleagues blame for repeated kidnapping, harvesting embryos, and painfully raping their minds and bodies, are in fact nice guys really when you get to know them. The message of the book seems to be: "Resistance is futile. The Grays know what's best for us." There is no doubting Ms Haley's good intentions, but this is New Age sentimentality at its most dangerous. Greenleaf Publications, Box 9386, Columbus, MS 39705, USA. 1994; hb \$18.95, pp32. ISBN: 1-883729-01-7.

Bob Rickard

COMPETITION CORNER

Competition #11 - From what star system did the alien abductors of Betty and Barney Hill claim to come? The first three correct entries to be prised from the postbag will each win a copy of *Alien Discussions*. Only one entry per person, please, to reach us by postcard, email or fax by 1 October 1995.

Congratulations to Chris Lazenby of South Humberside, George Campbell of Caithness and Aundrea Murphy of Richmond, Virginia - winners of Competition #9 - who correctly named Peenemunde as the secret Nazi rocket testing range. We also accepted Blizna in Poland as V2 testing was transferred there after the RAF destroyed Peenemunde in 1943. They each win a copy of *Man-made UFOs* by Childress and Vesco, courtesy of Adventures Unlimited Press.

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X-FILES

EPISODE BY EPISODE GUIDE
TO TV'S STRANGEST SHOW

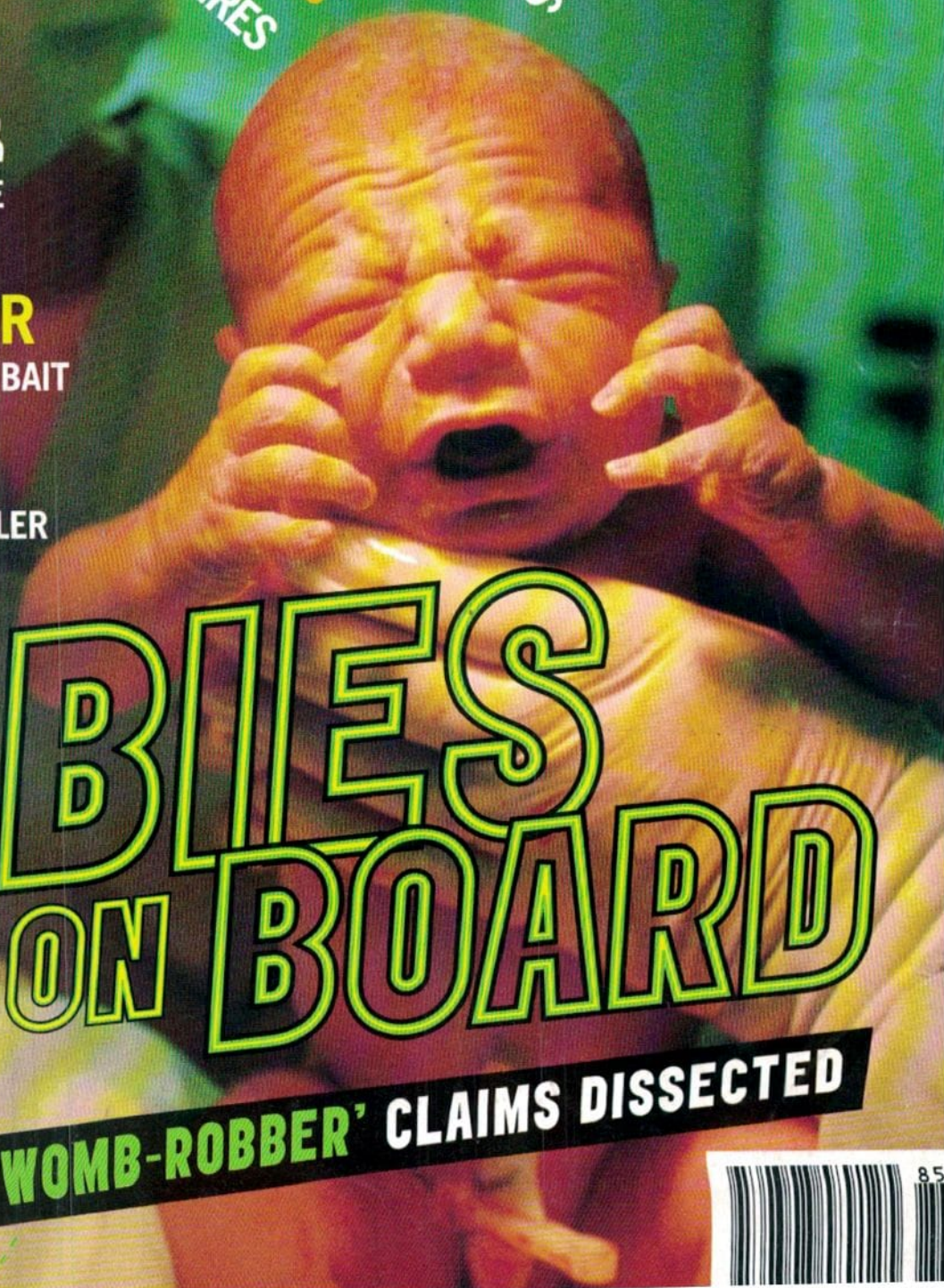
CROCKY HORROR

I USED MY WIFE AS GATOR BAIT

GOATSUCKER

MYSTERY MAMMAL MANGLER

VAMPIRES
SNAKES
KITTENS
QUAKES
CLOWNS



BABIES ON BOARD

'ALIEN WOMB-ROBBER' CLAIMS DISSECTED



AFTER THE FUNERAL: THE POSTHUMOUS ADVENTURES OF FAMOUS CORPSES

by Edwin Murphy

A riveting anthology of tales concerning the adventures of bodies and organs of famous people. Besides the celebrated stories of Cromwell's head, Einstein's brain, Dorothy Parker's dust and Louis XIV's heart (eaten by Frank Buckland at a dinner party), there are less familiar episodes, such as the fiasco of William the Conqueror's funeral and the chance discovery of Emanuel Swedenborg's head in a Welsh antique shop.

I was interested to learn that reactionary fanatics had raided the Panthéon in Paris in 1814 and stolen the remains of both Voltaire and Rousseau, the whereabouts of which are unknown today.

And did you know that Tom Paine's bones were stolen from New Rochelle by William Cobbett, who smuggled them back to England and carted them round the country in a vain attempt to raise money for a commemorative statue to his hero? Cobbett bequeathed them to a drunkard son who sold them to clear his debts. They were last seen in a London curio shop in 1836, and possibly in Kent in the 1930s. Where are they now?

Citadel Press: 120 Enterprise Ave, Secaucus, NJ 07094, USA. 1995, pb \$9.95, pp244, photos, bib., index, ISBN: 0-8065-1599-6.

PAUL SIEVEKING

QABALAH: A Primer

by John Bonner

On the edge of the philosophy of science, there are breakthroughs in understanding ancient knowledge systems. When interpreted as consistent alternative ways of viewing the universe, some of these yield exciting scientific possibilities. John Bonner's book provides a comprehensive introduction to one of the most sophisticated of such alternative cosmologies, the Jewish mystical tradition known as the Qabalah.

Qabalah, a mnemonic system understandable as a circuit diagram for the universe and soul or a Gnostic pinball table, is a complex field having a reputation for impenetrability. Admirably, Bonner makes his subject lucid without over-simplifying. We are guided through the pathways of the Qabalistic tree, their attributes and their associations logically arranged for comfortable ingestion.

Emphasis is on the practical, with Bonner pointing out that understanding of Qabalah is unlikely to be reached without experiment and exploration. To this end, appendices include descriptions of banishing rituals along with explanations of gematria, the qabalistic science of numerology. A splendid introduction to an obscure yet fascinating realm.

Skoob Books, London. 1995, pb £6.99 (\$11.99), pp237, illus, appendices, glossary, bib. ISBN 1-871438-57-8.

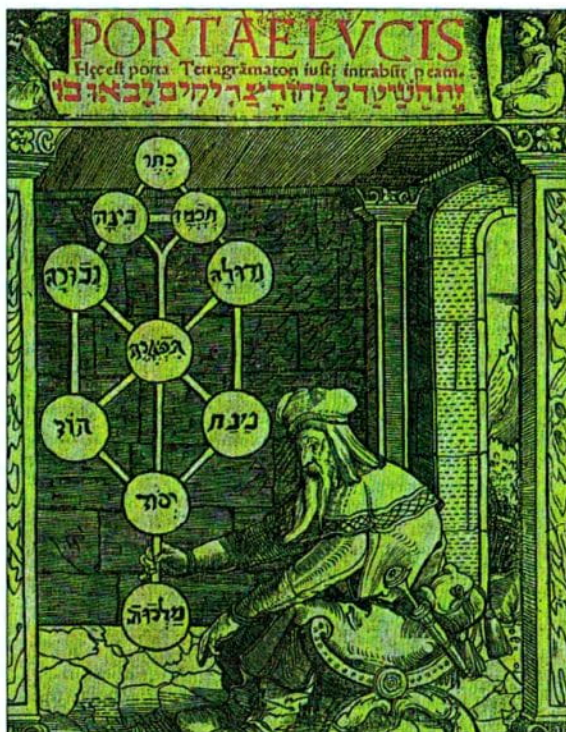
ALAN MOORE

INDONESIA HANDBOOK

by Bill Dalton

Indonesia, to most European and American minds, is still a mysterious faraway place. For Australians and New Zealanders, for whom Indonesia is a close neighbour, it was a place more feared than understood (because it was home to 180 million people led by a seemingly belligerent, anti-white/European dictatorship).

Happily, this perception is changing and commentators, like Bill Dalton and his contributors Carl Parkes and Bob Nilsen, are helping create that change. Unlike most of the available 'travel guides' (which seem, for the most part, to be written by paternalistic imperialists) this *Handbook* is an honest book. The truth can hurt, however, and you won't find this book on sale in Indonesia due to its less-than-flattering remarks about the country's leadership.



Number crunching: make sense of the lottery of life with Qabalah

Regardless of the politics, Dalton's astute observations and sensitive treatment of native customs and beliefs offer Fortean a remarkable view of the inherent strangeness of this multi-islanded nation. His section on the rituals and cults surrounding the *Dukun* (the native shamans) will delight any keen student of anthropology.

Cryptozoologists will feast on the sections on Indonesia's weird and largely unknown wildlife – including reports that the Tasmanian Tiger has been sighted in Irian Jaya, which really is a place where "there be dragons". This book is one hell of a good read and you don't even have to be a traveller to thoroughly enjoy it.

Moon Publications Inc: Box 3040, Chico, CA 95927-3040, USA. In Europe, Australia & NZ: Allen & Unwin, London & Sydney. 1995, pb £15.95, US \$25, Aust \$29.95, pp360, index, bib, illus, maps, glossary. ISBN: 1-56691-062-5.

RICHARD GWYNN-SEARY

THE SEARCH FOR THE GRAIL

by Graham Phillips

The Holy Grail has (perhaps) been found in Warwickshire; it is a tiny onyx cup, only 6cm high. Graham Phillips' book culminates in his own tracking down of the eggcup-shaped object; but most of the book outlines his own Grail theory. The blurb calls Phillips a 'historical detective'; the earlier book *The Green Stone* called him a 'psychical researcher'.

The Search for the Grail is one of those glorious 'unified theory' books which link whatever the author wants to link through the BLL method (Bloody Loose Logic) – named after the authors of *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*. Throughout the book, in every argument, we read "perhaps... it could be that... is possibly... may be... might be..."; then by the following chapter these speculations have become facts to be built upon with yet further might and maybes.

Phillips manages – brilliantly, persuasively and probably fallaciously – to link the legendary and 'historical' Arthur (apparently Owain Ddantgwyn), the legendary and 'historical' Camelot (supposedly Viroconium), the Grail, Pope Joan, the Cathars, the Tarot, the Gospel of Thomas, and even Robin Hood and Maid Marian.

With the Grail it's possible to argue almost anything by selective use of different 'evidence'. Crucial to Phillips' argument is that Pelagianism, a British heresy, was an alternative (via Joseph of Arimathea) to the apostolic succession of the Popes of the Roman Church; whereas the actual difference of opinion was over original sin, predestination and free will.

It is unfortunate that his most startling assertions have the fewest supporting references. His bibliography doesn't include, for example, the definitive works on Pope Joan (by Joan Morris and R. & D. Pardoe), or any of the significant works, historical and spiritual, on Tarot. The warning bells really go off with claims like "The view of most modern historians is that the Tarot originated with the Albigenes". Interesting theory – no sources.

What is particularly irritating is that some of his logical steps might well be right, while others are pure supposition, and still others are almost certainly wrong; yet the technique of his argument is the same in every case. The most obvious deleterious effect of this is that it makes it very difficult for the average reader to distinguish between the possible and the wildly improbable.

The accompanying press release states that when the tiny onyx cup was taken to the British Museum "it was identified as dating from early Roman times". In fact, as Phillips actually says in the book, "no one was prepared to commit themselves; it could equally have been a 19th century replica". Quite so.

Century, London. 1995, hb £15.99, photos, chronology, bib, index. ISBN 0-7126-7533-7.

DAVID V. BARRETT

fortean times

the journal of strange phenomena

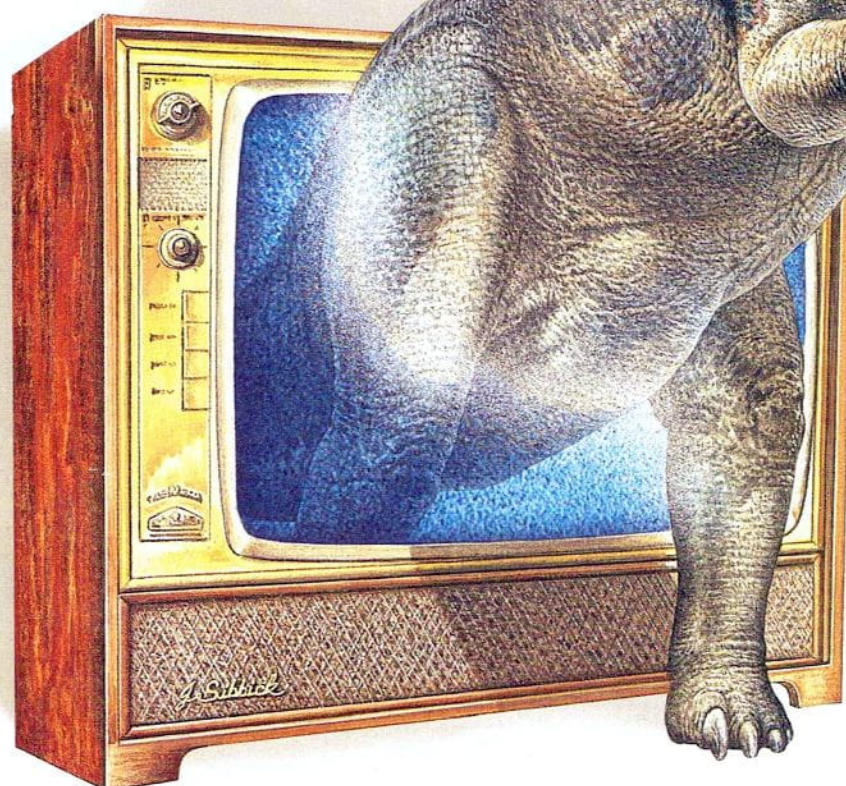
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CLUED UP OR CLUELESS?





DARRYL ANKA/BEAR BOOKS

that some percentage of abductees are not mad or bad, we Fortean are obliged to ask about the origin of the experience and how it is that so many people

are claiming the same thing. We must study 'realities', self-histories and motivations, and learn to distinguish between the real and the false, the profound and the trivial. Above all, we must learn not to reject abductee accounts, however preposterous, out of hand. It is a real challenge.

Beyond my wildest dreams is Kim Carlsberg's diary of her experiences – she calls them 'dreams' – as she is transported through extremes of terror and ecstasy by Greys who seem to be able to do whatever they like with her body, her mind, her everyday world and even space-time. If this is madness, it comes across as lucid and as perceptive as 'normal' everyday consciousness except for the bizarre content. It is also peppered with moments of transformation that in a more traditional context would be seen as fundamentally spiritual – as when Ms Carlsberg accidentally touches a cold and menacing Grey during an abduction, triggering an instant perception of their loving awareness and a feeling of calm to replace her anger and anxiety.

Carlsberg, who is a professional photographer, comes across as quite sincere in her claim that the aliens burst into her life uninvited and forced her to change. She feels strangely enhanced, yet bewildered and isolated. Under these circumstances she has chosen to present her chronicle as an "art piece", supplemented by some fascinating paintings by Darryl Anka. This book is one of the better examples of a growing genre and the reader, like me, must find a way to identify its value in the grand scheme of things.

Bear & Co, Santa Fe, NM 87504-2860, USA. 1995, pb, pp286, full colour illus. (Available in UK from Airlift Books, tel: 0181 804 0400, £16.99). ISBN: 1-879181-25-8.

BOB RICKARD

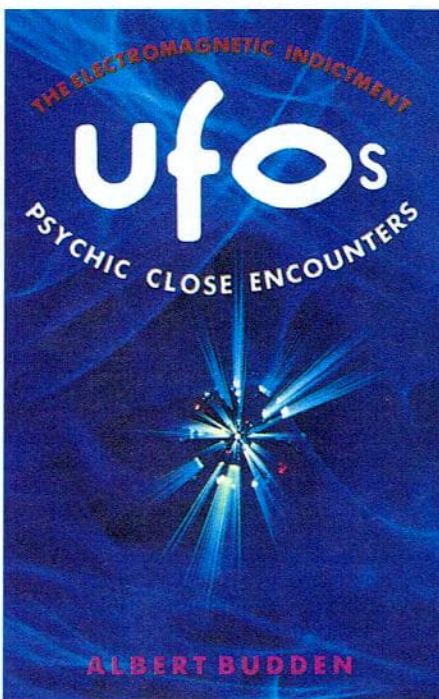
UFOs: Psychic Close Encounters

Albert Budden

We have been blessed of late with a flurry of above-average UFO books. Here is another. Cool-headed, Budden steps back from the fray, looking again at the evidence from UFO encounters to see whether or not it can be explained without recourse to the usual entrenched arguments.

Over the past 50 years our environment has become saturated with vast quantities of electromagnetic radiation, from power lines, TV aerials, microwave transmitters, radar (the list is endless), and evidence mounts that this can have bizarre effects on the human system. With these strange effects in mind, Budden re-examines

classic UFO cases, such as the 'Mince Pie Martians' and makes a persuasive case for many UFO encounters being the result of exposure to electromagnetic pollution. This makes sense of the baffling nature of high strangeness experiences, ghost/alien parallels and why aliens seem so like humans in many ways. It can also account for many of the physical traces produced and the post-encounter illnesses often reported.



Carefully argued and sensibly developed, Budden's theories have a positive contribution to make to the resolution of the UFO enigma (so far as it ever can be resolved), but his writing does leave a lot to be desired. The book positively gouts acronyms and abbreviations, sometimes several a page, and trying to keep track of all the UREs, UAPs, UIs, ESs and so on is enough to drive you bandy for lack of a glossary. Nonetheless, it is a book worth adding to the shelf.

Blandford, London. 1995, pb £9.99, pp256, plates, figs, notes, index, ISBN: 0-7137-2421-8.

IAN SIMMONS

DID MARCO POLO GO TO CHINA?

Frances Wood

The answer Wood wants to promote is "No" and this fairly brief book does make a reasonably persuasive argument for Polo's re-evaluation. Perhaps the most surprising thing about the whole affair is that Polo's book *Description of the World* has been treated with such reverence for so long. A collaboration between Polo and the romance writer Rusticello when they were imprisoned together, it's allegedly based on Polo's travels as a trader between 1271 and 1295, including a 17-year stay in China.

However, there are many variant manuscripts, some containing considerable interpolations, and it's by no means clear

when, and under what circumstances, the pair were imprisoned anyway. This makes it a fairly dodgy text to start with.

Some of Wood's points – that Polo fails to mention the Great Wall, tea or female foot-binding, etc. – could perhaps be explained away as errors of observation, memory or circumstance. However, the man allegedly spent 17 years in the service of Qubilai Khan, in the highly bureaucratic state of China, and claims to have governed the city of Yangzhou for three years. Yet he makes no mention of Chinese writing and, perhaps more importantly, there is no mention of him in Chinese records, despite the fact that the histories of that land are peppered with the names of far less important foreigners. Add to that the fact that Polo undoubtedly lied about introducing the use of the mangonel at the siege of a city taken before he could possibly have arrived in China, and that no trading seems to have taken place during the entire stay in China, and the cumulative effect is considerable.

So, did he go? On this showing, I'm not sure. He could, as Wood suggests, have compiled the book from other, now lost, travel guides, and quite possibly from the experiences of other members of the Polo family; or he could just have made an awful hash of writing up what happened. Either way, after reading this highly entertaining and amusingly written account, it'll never be possible to look at Marco Polo in quite the same way, or with quite the same trust, again.

Secker & Warburg, London. 1995, hb £14.99, pp192, index, refs, bib. ISBN 0-436-20166-6

STEVE MOORE

FORTEAN STUDIES Volume Two

Edited by Steve Moore

Less an extension of *Fortean Times* than a consolidation of its academic tradition, *Fortean Studies* eschews an undeniably amusing tabloid froth to sound instead a deeper, more considered fathom of anomaly research.

This is achieved, moreover, without any hint of dustiness, despite the detailed, scholarly approach. In fact, it might be said that in this volume and its equally illustrious predecessor we're reminded of the sheer exhilarating and eclectic sweep of ideas that Charles Fort himself exemplified. Here we have phantom Russian soldiers head-to-head with the ley-hunters of the Third Reich, while Icelandic skrimsls rise from sub-aquatic wheels of light. *Fortean Studies* is, in short, a rare compendium of marvels, as examined through a lens of diamond-sharp research.

Opening with Michael Shoemaker's exhaustive study of the puzzling phenomenon of underwater lightwheels and concluding with a vital comprehensive index to FT for 1994, nowhere in this considerably bulky tome do we find anything but lean meat, with no trace of flab or filler. Ulrich Magin, with his article on Nazi archaeologists and seekers-of-Atlantis Hermann Wirth and Otto Sigfrid Reuter,

SOUNDS

THE BIRTH CAUL

Alan Moore, David J & Tim Perkins

Alan Moore is a writer whose work blurs boundaries: between fact and fiction, rationality and magick, the personal and the universal, the immediate and the eternal. With evocative and atmospheric tracks from his musical companions, this CD captures a once-only live reading of a fierce meditation on the mysteries and miseries of birth and growth, of life and death. A powerful and intense piece of work, not for the faint-hearted.

CD22. 60 mins (approx), £12 (plus 50p p&p), available from: charm, 15 Devonshire Place, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE2 2NB.

J ARTHUR PIGFAT

TIMEPEACE

Medicine Head

FT isn't the NME, but Fortean collect information on all kinds of anomalous data. This release of a storming live set from 70s favourites *Medicine Head* has strong Fortean connections. It features a musician who specialises in the truly anomalous combination of harmonicas, jaw harps, clavies and mouthbow as well as sporting "the best afro hair in the world [fo' a white boy]". Why should we care? Mainly because the sporter of said afro hair, PeterHope-Evans, currently makes regular appearances as a 'special correspondent' in these very pages. Twenty years ago he was half of *Medicine Head* and the band were on stage at The Marquee recording these 13 tracks. Musically speaking, the album combines scorching and basic blues with understated and melodic songs. Harpo is on fine form throughout. The production captures the atmosphere of the small venue to perfection. They simply don't make them like this any more.

Red Steel Records, RMC-CD0201, 58 mins, price unknown.
NEIL NIXON

THE CASE

Jon Downes & The Amphibians From Outer Space



Unbeknown to most of us out here, Jonathan Downes – the esteemed publisher of the excellent cryptozoology mag *Animals and Men* – has an alternative career as a rock star with The Amphibians From Outer Space, the world's only self-confessed Fortean rock and roll band. This is his sixth album, which arrives resplendent in a deeply peculiar sleeve from Doc Sheils, who also guests vocally on the album. There is a love song to the Mad Gasser of Mattoon, a mysterious cloaked character from the 1940s who reportedly climbed into women's bedrooms to spray them with anæsthetising gas; another which imagines a porno film based on Hawking's *Brief History of Time* and namechecks Nessie, while a third combines auto-eroticism and self-immolation.

Jon's vocals work well in counterpoint to his very effective band, but the album is lifted out of the ordinary by Jon's co-vocalist Natalie Board who really brings the songs to full life. *The Case* is a cheerful and energetic burst of Fortean music, informed heavily by the more melodic end of punk with dashes of folk psychedelia thrown in, pleasantly reminiscent at times of the long disbanded and utterly forgotten Kamikaze Sex Pilots.

CD. £10, available by mail order from 15 Holne Court, Exwick, Exeter, Devon EX4 2NA

IAN SIMMONS

Fortean Studies

Volume 2



Edited by Steve Moore

casts a spotlight upon two intriguing figures from the darker side of Fortean investigation. Jean-Louis Brodu convincingly debunks the body of revisionist ideology that has arisen from ninth-century accounts of travellers arriving by sky-ships from the realm of Magonia, while Michel Meurger's 'Of Skrimsh and Men' is a discussion of the visionary nature of these fabulous Icelandic water-monsters.

It is difficult to choose a stand-out item from this cabinet of curiosities, but special mention must be made of Nigel Watson & Granville Oldroyd's intriguing narrative, 'Snow on Their Boots', which documents the many sightings and reports of regiments of Russian soldiers landing secretly in Scotland during World War I, and Steve Moore's patient and fastidious unravelling of the mysteries pertaining to the odd, reputedly unearthly residue known as 'Foam of the Moon'.

A profound cornucopia of the unique and the wonderful, *Fortean Studies* reaches the peculiar, tentacled parts that other journals cannot. Recommended.

John Brown Publishing Ltd, London, 1995, pb £19.99, pp320, refs, illus. ISBN 1-870870-70-0. (Available by mail only from Fortean Times, 20 Paul St., Frome, Somerset, BA11 1DX, UK – or telephone 01373 451777 with credit card details.)

ALAN MOORE

THE COSMIC CONNECTION

Michael Hesemann

There is clearly no doubting Michael Hesemann's enthusiasm for the subjects of UFOs and crop circles. To him those trampled agriglyphs are messages from the space people and he distorts almost every factoid within reach to 'prove' it. Relevance, authenticity, truth, validity – pah! These are fetters for philosophical plodders who require solid ground on which to erect their explanations. Why should the industrious Hesemann – editor of the German ufology publication *Magazin 2000* – worry when he's on a roll? Hey, let's chuck in the Face on Mars,

ancient Sumerian gods, Arthurian legend and... No thought required, as whatever sticks *must* be important (or it wouldn't stick, right?)

Hesemann's chapter gleefully attacking circlemakers would be amusing if it were not full of egregious errors of fact and interpretation. For example, I doubt that Jim Schnabel is a Jesuit spy, and I know Robert Irving's wife is Italian not "German" and that he never had an uncle who was "a high-ranking civil servant in the Home Office" – and the "mysterious foundation" which Hesemann find so sinister as a shaping force in Irving's artistic campaigns is nothing more than the Warhol Foundation (from which Irving once had a grant). Hesemann dismisses Irving as "a dubious photographer" yet Irving has a successful career with works in exhibitions at the Photographers' Gallery and Southbank and taught print-making at the Royal Photographic Society.

It's a prime example of the join-the-dots gasp-at-the-picture school of New Age and mystery mongering. Nice production, pity about the credulous text.

Gateway Books: *The Hollies, Wellow, Bath* BA2 8QJ, UK. 1995, pb £12.95, pp168, index, bib, plates. ISBN: 1-85860-017-0.

BOB RICKARD

AN ORTHODOX VOICE

John Michell

This collection of 24 of John Michell's delightful columns in *The Oldie* magazine, selected by Deborah Jones, actually provides considerable food for thought and "irritation to those who deserve it". The subject matter is wide-ranging, from anti-metrication and folk prophecy to post-mortem existence and aliens. Michell stands up for the traditionalist, so expect lashings of leys, Platonic philosophy and archaic asides. Charles Fort is mentioned frequently with reverence. The perfect toilet-side book for short meditations.

Jam Publications, Upper Butts, Brentford, Middx TW8 8DF. Tel: 0171 221 7680. 1995, pb, pp56. UK £5.95, Europe £6.50, US airmail \$11, Elsewhere £7.50 (inc p&p). ISBN: 0-9527305-0-2.

THE QUEST FOR BECKET'S BONES

John Butler

In September 1538, St Thomas Becket's magnificent 13th century shrine, in Canterbury, was dismantled and his relics vanished. Were they burnt or buried by agents of Henry VIII? Or were they hidden and reburied later in the cathedral? Many people since then have believed so, and Professor Butler's enjoyable book relates the quest and follows the myriad clues, but resists any glib conclusion. It's a splendid tale of human folly, wishful thinking and hidden agendas.

Yale Univ. Press. 1995, hb £16.95, pp180, photos, index, notes, ISBN: 0-300-06115-3.

REVIEWERS: JOE McNALLY, STEVE MOORE, BOB RICKARD, PAUL SIEVEKING, IAN SIMMONS

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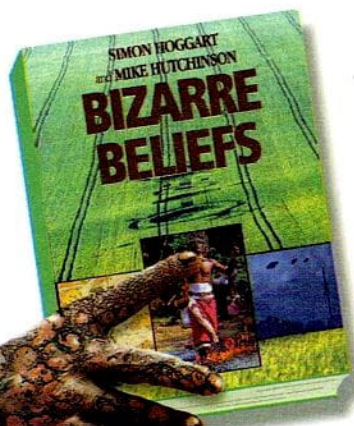


90

BIZARRE BELIEFS

SIMON HOGGART AND MIKE HUTCHINSON

RICHARD COHEN BOOKS, LONDON. 1995, PB £12.99, pp224, INDEX, BIB, ILLUS. ISBN 1-86066-022-3.



It would be easy to picture Hoggart, who writes for *The Guardian*, and Hutchinson, who runs the UK end of Prometheus Books (the US skeptical publishing house), eyeing the lavish production given books they regard as dangerous New Age and paranormal twaddle and yearning for the chance to present the skeptic's case in a colourfully-illustrated and well designed coffee-table format. To think it was motivated from envy would be uncharitable as the skeptics (although the authors do not advertise themselves as such) do have important observations to make about the extent of belief in the 'paranormal' today and those who trade in it.

Cohen Books gave them that opportunity and they make the most of it, covering many of the main interest areas we all love

or loathe: UFOs, abductions, Bermuda triangle, crop circles, spiritualism, psychic detectives, astrology, fire walking, psi, graphology, Nostradamus, ghosts, curses, biorhythms, hypnosis, dowsing, Nessie and coincidences.

So how did they do? A bit hit and miss, in my opinion. Their greatest omission was due in part to the natural hubris of skeptics. Not only do the authors fail to introduce themselves and say why they are qualified to disabuse the rest of us of our silly ideas, but they miss the chance at the outset to define precisely what they mean by 'paranormal' and 'myth' and other terms they share with us.

Their aim is straightforward: the authors hope that by showing credulous and superstitious people "that there is an alternative explanation for almost everything in the paranormal world" they will wake them from their 'sleep of reason'. Of course, they are entitled to make their own selection of those 'alternatives' – the more prosaic the better, it seems – but what they are offering is hardly likely to make the credulous change their minds.

They parade before us a succession of familiar and easy targets – cheating spiritualist mediums, stagey magicians, retro-selective prophets, cranky theorists, deluded occultists, absurd abductionists and crooked cultists. Do not assume these are the only 'alternatives', or even the best ones; they are straw men, intended to represent their topic in general, which are easily rubbished.

The introduction deserves special study as it left me confused about their intentions. In various places, Hoggart and Hutchinson utter mollifying phrases, like:

"Nor are we saying we're sure we're right"; and: "We certainly don't claim to have all the solutions..." and even admit they cannot prove a negative (eg. that toys are not made in Santa's workshop). But they proceed as though they do.

Fortean will readily agree with much of what the authors say – especially about the need to think clearly and the need to clear away the erroneous clutter that impedes any study. We don't have any problem, either, with deconstructing cases to better understand the interaction and sequence of their elements. But neither analysis nor the identification of other possible explanations is the end of the process, as *Bizarre Beliefs* implies. As skeptics, they cannot see beyond factual truth to any other kind of truth (eg. symbolic or spiritual) that may give meaning to even patent nonsense. This, I suppose, is what passes for 'humanist rationalism' these days.

Curiously, the book ends agreeing with Arthur Koestler's statement that meaning "is ultimately a matter of inclination and temperament". If that's the case, why did the authors bother setting out on their mission to the clueless? The answer seems to be that behind their didactic posing the authors really do care about the waste of social and personal resources on matters which are plainly wrong. The thing is, some of us have different ideas of just what it is that constitutes 'wrong'. Despite these flaws it is a worthy book on which beginners can cut their teeth with confidence, always assuming it doesn't put them off progressing to the "millions of unexplained mysteries" the authors acknowledge are still out there.

BOB RICKARD

THE ENTERTAINMENT BOMB

COLIN BENNETT



Virtualist manifesto slyly disguised as slapstick millennial thriller, this intriguing volume is in itself an entertainment, although one of a seductively subversive nature. Colin Bennett depicts a world rocked to its philosophic core by the heretic theories of a Bunteresque renaissance blimp, namely one Doctor Heironymous Fields. Fields's notion, baldly stated, is that we stand on the brink of something called the Entertainment State, an endless 'Crinkley Bottom' manifested in the flesh; a virtual firmament wherein the stars of soap-opera or the Top Ten are the only fixed points that have meaning. Greeted with enthusiasm by a

populace already Baywatch-dazed and ad-shell-shocked, Fields's nightmare vision nonetheless conceals a paradisiacal agenda: a total global re-immersion in the primal mythopoeic world of gods and shamanism, to be achieved during the pregnant pauses in Gold Blend commercials.

In the course of this intoxicating romp, Bennett adopts a style that is deceptively off-hand and casual to tackle matters of considerable moment. Underneath the cunning twists of plot and the admittedly impressive verbal fireworks lies a serious, astute perception of the changing values of reality within a media-massaged world.

While undoubtedly drawing considerable inspiration from previous pessimistic commentary on this phenomenon, such as Neil Postman's excellent *Amusing Ourselves to*

Death or Jerry Mander's equally praise-worthy *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*, Bennett has attempted to imagine what the benefits and opportunities of such a world might be. In doing so, some fundamental notions of what constitutes reality are laid upon the line and some distinctly Fortean analogies are drawn, with both media creations like Shane Ritchie and beasts like the Surrey puma seen as two different strains of "half-real forms".

There's a prankster intellect at work here, and a deadly serious buffoonery that conjures up Wilson and Shea's disruptive and discordian *Illuminatus!* trilogy. *The Entertainment Bomb* charts a Scud-like trajectory through the celebrity-haunted æthyr of what Umberto Eco called hyper-reality, then travels on into the magical and archetypal planes that lie above.

The world ends, not with a bang nor a whimper, but with canned applause. Check this one out.

NEW FUTURIST BOOKS, LONDON. 1996, PB £7.99, pp274. ISBN 1-899690-01-8.

ALAN MOORE



RELEASING HISTORY OF GERMANY • INDIAN ROPE TRICK • DRAGON SMOKE • 1997 FEBRUARY 1997

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THE VALLEYS THAT TIME FORGOT



MINDWARP

THE SECRET TECHNOLOGY OF THOUGHT CONTROL



THE HALLELUJAH REVOLUTION: The Rise of the New Christians

Ian Cotton



Reports of strange experiences, supernatural powers, transformations of personality and encounters with deities, angels and demons are not uncommon in Fortean literature. Nor are tales of visits to psychologist Michael Persinger's 'dungeon' at Laurentian University, in Canada, with its attendant electrical stimulation of the brain to produce visionary effects. Recently, it has seemed that with Persinger, all things are possible.

The Hallelujah Revolution however, does something quite new, and does it well. It places all these events – and the Persinger experience – in the context of what the author calls the 'New Christians'. These Christians are certainly different from the ones I knew in the Church of England. They are vigorous, caring, deeply committed to their faith, and they – most of them, anyway – display their faith in practical works, operating in the areas where they live to provide the sort of caring, training and personal support that our government can't or won't fund any more. Here, there is plenty about Pecan, a remarkable project based in Peckham. If you can do good works in Peckham, you can do them anywhere.

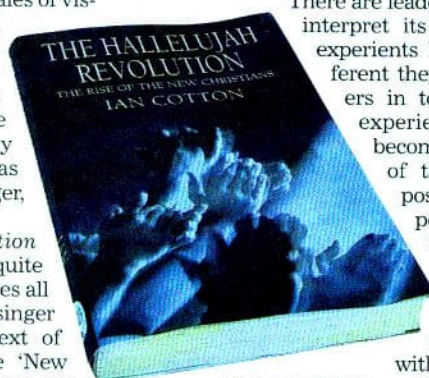
The Christianity is somewhere on the Evangelical/Charismatic axis, with elements of the 'Toronto Blessing' and Sheffield's scandalised 'Nine O'Clock Service'. Speaking in tongues is pretty much *de rigueur*, miracles that work to the individual's benefit are an anticipated part of the deal with the Almighty and underlying all the good works is the desire, compulsion even, to convert. That compulsion appears to become stronger as you look up the leadership ladder in the ambitious, closely intertwined world of house churches and movements that Ian Cotton has taken considerable trouble to understand.

Understanding is important, and Cotton mixes factual reporting with some intelligent and informed analysis. He is a professional writer, with a background in the *Mail on Sunday*, *The Sunday Times* and *The Observer*, and he has good points to make about comparisons with earlier religious movements, along with some more arguable ones about the movements being a counter-culture type of response to a decline in the quality of life in the nineties. But he knows his stuff, and it's worth considering his ideas and proposals in the light of reports of abduction experiences, shamanic episodes, near-death experiences and the rest of the subjective, internal high-strangeness events that somehow contribute to dramatic changes in lifestyle and personality.

For the people involved in Pecan, Iethus and the many other house churches and groups dealt with here, a circle certainly doesn't begin and end anywhere. It begins and ends with the One God, who has a close,

proprietary and often financially beneficial interest in those who serve Him, and lead others to do so. These people care for each other because they feel motivated to do so and the caring works for the great majority: it would not occur to them to ask whether there is really anyone other than human beings involved in that caring process.

At the root of all this belief and action is mysterious, mystical, thrilling experience, that sets its participants apart from others.



There are leaders who encourage it, interpret its meanings, tell the experiences how special and different they are, and draw others in to share those same experiences so they can become special, too. Some of the leaders achieve positions of remarkable power and influence. If you can see parallels between this and other claims of extraordinary interaction with non-human intelligences over the past 20 years or so, you'll really appreciate this excellent book.

LONDON: LITTLE, BROWN & CO., 1995. HB £16.99, PP242, INDEX. ISBN 0-316-90744-8.

KEVIN MCCLURE

BLAKE

Peter Ackroyd



After impressive and precise biographies of Eliot and Dickens, there's the faint and yet distinct sense here of Peter Ackroyd settling on a subject whose enraptured vision he in part feels an affinity towards; a careful reverence in his approach to Blake's ethereal side that is accomplished without compromising the integrity and candour of the piece.

William Blake – the visionary London prophet-painter-poet of the 18th century – is no easy subject. Any understanding of this luminous and lyric thinker must be undertaken from the inside; from within Blake's dazzling, sometimes inscrutable cosmology and worldview. Ackroyd makes as fine a fist of this as might be reasonably expected, going further into Blake's subjective realm of spirits, shades and angels than, say, Alexander Gilchrist in his still-definitive *The Life of William Blake*. Ackroyd adds both insightful colouring and an impressive filigree of period detail to the basic Gilchrist outline. In the process, various gems of Fortean are unearthed.

We're told, as an example, of the 'Fiery Meteor' – a bluish fireball, big as a full moon and with a blazing orange tail that seared across the London sky one evening in 1783 – inspiring Blake's engraving of his brother Robert's image, *The Approach of Doom*. Some of the myths surrounding Blake, such as his famous and prophetic warning that Tom Paine should flee from

England while he still could, are here gently defused. Blake's central mystery, the source of his angelic voice and vision is, however, left respectfully untouched.

A sensitive, perceptive portrait of perhaps England's greatest bard and seer, that augments its text with line engravings and a shrewdly-picked array of gorgeous colour plates, combining word and image in a manner that Blake would appreciate. Those interested in either the artist or his visionary world could do worse than invest in this compelling, lucid study.

LONDON: SINCLAIR-STEVENSON, 1995. HB £20.00, pp399, INDEX, BIB, NOTES, PLATES, ILLUS. ISBN 1-85619-278-4.

ALAN MOORE

THE MODERN NUMEROLOGY

John King



Containing far more than the title would suggest, this is a good round-up of numerical lore, starting with the history of numbers, their peculiar properties, magic squares, the symbolic meanings of numbers in various cultures, and so on. King then moves on to discuss Kabbalah and gematria in their various forms, rubbishes the popular numerology to be found in cheap fortune-telling books, replacing it with his own, really quite complex, synthesis of the various interpretive traditions. A detailed work, mingling the scholarly and occult traditions. Recommended.

BLANDFORD, LONDON, 1996, PB £8.99, pp224, INDEX, BIB, NOTES, ILLUS, TABLES, APPENDICES. ISBN 0-7137-2560-5

STEVE MOORE

MYTH, MEANING, AND MEMORY ON ROMAN SARCOPHAGI

Michael Koortbojian



From the second century onward, it became common for the Roman aristocracy to bury their dead in highly decorated stone sarcophagi, carved with intricate mythological reliefs and intended to be displayed at festal visits to the tomb.

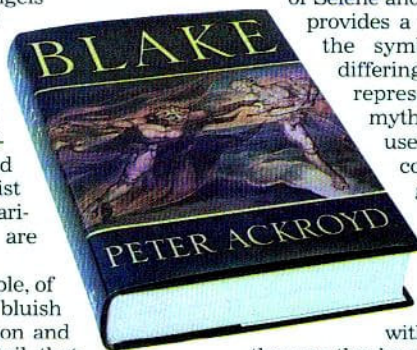
Concentrating on two of the major myths depicted, those of Aphrodite and Adonis and of Selene and Endymion, Koortbojian provides a detailed examination of the symbolism displayed, the differing attitudes to death they represent, and the way the myths are adapted to their use in a specific mortuary context. Fascinating,

groundbreaking work which, while perhaps limited in scope, is a timely reminder that ancient societies are not to be understood without taking into account

the way they're permeated by myth; and also that myth is not to be divorced from its social context. A splendid piece of work.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS, BERKELEY, CA, USA. 1995. HB \$40.00, pp238, INDEX, NOTES, BIB, PLATES. ISBN 0-520-08518-3.

STEVE MOORE



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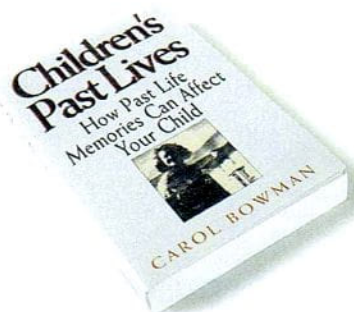
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DISCOVER YOUR PAST LIVES

CASSANDRA EASON



Quantum/Foulsham, Chippenham, Berks
SL1 5AP, 1996, pb £7.99, pp154.
ISBN 0-572-02198-4.

CHILDREN'S PAST LIVES: HOW PAST LIFE MEMORIES CAN AFFECT YOUR CHILD

CAROL BOWMAN



Element Books/Bantam, London & NY,
1997, hb £16.99, US\$24.95, pp310,
bib, notes. ISBN 1-86204-149-0.

PAST LIVES: CASE HISTORIES OF PREVIOUS EXISTENCE

DILYS GATER



Robert Hale, London, 1997, hb
£14.99, pp158, further reading.
ISBN: 0-7090-5947-7.

PAST LIVES, FUTURE LIVES

JENNY COCKELL



Piatkus, London, 1997, Pb £9.99,
pp168, further reading, illus, plates.
ISBN 0-7499-1608-7.

The idea of reincarnation has an attraction for most of us and profound implications, if true, for almost every aspect of human knowledge and behaviour. I am thus astonished that it is not taken seriously as a legitimate hypothesis for investigation – astonished, but not surprised because the subject has been almost completely annexed by the New Age industry and swamped in wishful thinking, woolly analysis and fashionable mystic babble. But is it, as the sceptics would have us believe, utter nonsense, lies and fantasy?

Of the four, Cassandra Eason's epitomises the New Age approach. After a skim through (mainly Eastern) ideas about reincarnation, Eason shows you 'How to be your own Regressionist'. In essence this

is another superficial romp through a variety of New Agery – crystals pendulums and candles – as aids for exercises in controlled dreams and imagination. The resulting images are interpreted as either glimpses of the future or memories of past lives. It's as simple (and simple-minded) as that.

Dilys Gater, a writer with more than 70 books to her credit, presents a more traditional case, but one rooted more in British spiritualism, selecting cases of past lives remembered by people she has met or past lives she has revealed for them in the course of her 'practise' as a healer and psychic. In her introduction, Gater apologises in advance for any errors or inaccuracies because she has had to remember "hundreds of past life sittings". So much for documentation!

Carol Bowman's book is more investigative, but only in the sense that having discovered that her six-year-old son's fear of fireworks was explained by his remembered death as a black soldier in the American Civil War, she sought out others who believed their children had past life memories. She now lectures as an expert in the field of childhood recollections of past existence, believing that the roots of their neurotic behaviour (and of many ailments like eczema) lie in past trauma and that uncovering this will bring healing. *Children's Past Lives*, says the blurb, wants to bring you comfort, uplift and transformation. If remembering is so healing, I must ask, why can't so many of us remember? Forgetting, in an evolutionary context, seems a stupid waste of opportunity.

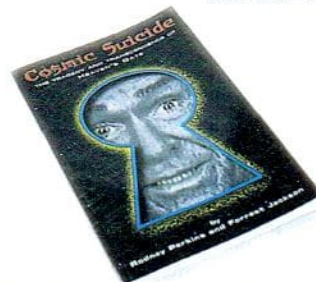
Only Jenny Cockell's book offers something different. She impressed us all, some time ago, with her account of how she came to believe she was the reincarnation of Mary Sutton, an Irish woman; as Jenny Cockell, she managed to trace and reunite Sutton's now elderly children. Her latest book presents glimpses of other lives she believes she has lived and discusses various ideas about reincarnation.

I think it is important to note that the majority of these accounts have been uncovered, extracted or enhanced by hypnotic regression, dreaming and controlled imagining techniques – even Jenny Cockell has resorted to these. The authors seem to believe, without any doubt, that memories retrieved in this way are authentic; everything they have to say follows from this premise. Confront that premise with the growing evidence that hypnosis interferes with memories and that our memories are often distorted, and the whole database of remembered lives begins to look very doubtful.

If there is something to reincarnation, it deserves better evidence than this. I want to see serious

explorations of subjects such as what happens between lives; how a new body is selected; whether groups of people reincarnate together; the implications of changing sex and relationships; the difficulty of remembering and the mystery of psychosomatic marks. These books provide only personal narratives at best, which, however interesting, offer little to convince a doubter like me.

BOB RICKARD



COSMIC SUICIDE: THE TRAGEDY AND TRANSCENDENCE OF HEAVEN'S GATE

RODNEY PERKINS AND FORREST JACKSON



Pentaradial Press, PO Box 8318, Dallas,
Texas 75205, 1997, pb, \$12.00,
128pp, illus, appendices, refs.
ISBN 0-9659512-1-9.

This is the first post-suicide book on the Heaven's Gate group we've seen, and it turns out to be a very pleasant surprise. Far from being a ghoulish cash-in, this is a well researched piece of journalism which wouldn't look too out of place in *Fortean Studies*. Perkins and Jackson examine both the beliefs and dogma of the group and the personalities involved, from Ti and Do to the surprisingly numerous surviving members. A little of the material will be familiar to anyone who read *FT's* report on the cult, but there's a lot here of value, including much Heaven's Gate literature and Applewhite's autopsy report.

The book's strength is in the way it puts the cult's beliefs in context, both in terms of their millenarian tendencies and of the curious SF themes that informed their cosmology. It gives a history of heresy and millennial beliefs, from Zoroastrianism's apocalypse of molten metal to the People's Temple, Aum and the Branch Davidians. Similarly, it examines assorted religious-themed science fiction, taking in Robert Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land* – which was a source of inspiration for both Applewhite and Charles Manson – and the VALIS experiences of Philip K Dick.

Overall, this is well assembled, commendably neutral and probably as good a book as there is to be written about Heaven's Gate.

JOE McNALLY



I, CROWLEY – ALMOST THE LAST CONFESSION OF THE BEAST

SNOO WILSON



MANDRAKE OF OXFORD,
OXFORD, 1997, PB
£9.99, pp252, ISBN
1869928-490.

To attempt the pseudo-autobiography of so contentious a figure of Aleister Crowley is to invite disaster.

It says much for playwright and broadcaster Snoo Wilson, responsible for Channel 4's excellent *Without Walls* Crowley apologia, that he has avoided the many pitfalls while also producing a work that is as perverse, funny and at times inexplicably moving as its subject.

Told in a convincing simulacrum of the Crowlean voice, *I, Crowley* is narrated from a vantage point of the magician's final years, before he died of hard-boiled eggs; of heroin; of Hastings. On the surface a deathbed denial of Crowley's alleged complicity in the demise of his disciple Raoul Loveday, gradually a broader portrait is revealed. We see a Magus down to his last spurt of the *elixir vitae*, clinging with a fierce, grim humour to the Will that had sustained him, even as mortality and doubt begin their final siege. Without concealing Crowley's more unpleasant traits, Wilson allows a glimpse, between the posturing and poisoned love affairs, of something genuine and noble. Recommended.

ALAN MOORE